

economy. We can actually get rid of America's debt over the next 18 years if we will do this.

So I hope, even though we have honest, here, honest philosophical differences about what the best way to reform Medicare is, what the best way to reform Social Security is, the point is we ought to be able to proceed in a spirit of honorable compromise because the goals are so important and the stakes are so high and because, frankly, the choices are a lot easier when you have a surplus than when you have a big deficit.

Next week I will propose a detailed plan to strengthen Medicare, to cut its costs, to modernize its operations, to use competition and innovation, to strengthen the core guarantee of quality care for all Americans who are elderly and eligible. I will also, for the first time, propose a way to help senior citizens with their greatest growing need, affordable prescription drugs. It is a huge issue out there for seniors.

Now, finding agreement on Social Security and Medicare will be hard. Finding agreement on tax cuts will be hard, although I hope the Congress will at least adopt targeted tax credits for long-term care and child care that I proposed. But we can do it. Now, regardless, Congress has to pass a budget this year. We must decide on how to use the surplus. So I hope we can work together to make progress on these goals.

Second, we ought to continue to advance our economy by doing more for the education of our people. As we have balanced the budget and cut the size of the Federal Government—listen to this—we have cut the size of the Federal Government to the same size it was when I was your age. The Federal Government now is the same size it was in 1962. That was a long time ago. *[Laughter]* Anyway, as we have done that, we have nearly doubled our investment in education and training. Why? Because, as was said in my introduction, the information age will be the education age.

Last year, at my urging, with school populations in our country at record highs, Congress passed a budget that began to hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the early years. Unbelievably to me, in the budget the majority is now writing, they re-

peal their pledge to finish the job of hiring those teachers. I just want Congress to keep its word. I think when you tell people something in an election year, you ought to still be for it the next year when there is no election.

I have also sent Congress an ambitious education reform plan because this is a year, as we do every 5 years, we have to reauthorize the general program under which we give money to schools all over America. And I believe we should dramatically change it to hold schools and school districts and States more accountable for results and to give them more funds for after-school, summer school programs, and to target and turn around failing schools.

It is controversial. But it is based on what is working in the States that are having success in lifting all their schools in student achievement. Again I say, there may be those who disagree with me philosophically; we ought to have an open debate about this and come to an honorable compromise. We do not have to continue to spend money in the same old way when we know we can spend it more effectively based on what we have seen in our schools.

Third, let me say something that I hope will be important to all of you and has, doubtless, been experienced by some of you. We've got the strongest economy on record, all right, but there are still too many poor neighborhoods and rural communities where prosperity is something you read about, not experience. And I believe we should be committed to going into this new century leaving no one behind. This is not only a good thing to do ethically; it is also good economics.

I keep thinking every day, now, how can we continue to grow this economy? How can we drive unemployment even lower, create even more jobs, without having inflation? One way is to find new investment in America. So I say to you, we've spent a lot of time seeking new markets abroad, but our most important new markets are right here at home.

Two weeks from now, for 4 days, I will lead an unprecedented trip across America so our country can see the places I'm talking about. I'll go to the hills and hollows of Kentucky, to the Mississippi Delta, to a poor

community in the Midwest, to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to Phoenix, to inner-city Los Angeles. I'll be joined by distinguished corporate leaders and political leaders of both parties. Again, this is something that should not be a political issue at all. We want to shine a spotlight on the pockets of poverty that remain in America and on the potential they have for new investment, new jobs, new hope, new opportunity.

I will ask Congress to do its part by passing my new markets initiative. It provides for tax incentives and loan guarantees for people to invest in these areas, the same kind of incentives we give people today to invest in emerging economies abroad. I think that whatever we encourage people to do abroad, we ought to give the same encouragement to do at home, to give our people those kinds of chances.

Finally, I think we ought to do more to protect our young people from violence, to redeem the awful sacrifice of the children of Littleton, of the other school shootings, of the 13 American children we lose every single day to gun violence.

After Littleton, our whole Nation came together in grief and determination. We know there are many causes of youth violence, and therefore, there must be many solutions. Hillary and I are launching a national campaign against youth violence to bring all kinds of people from all sectors of our communities together. We have done this before, like Mothers and Students Against Drunk Driving dramatically reduced drunk driving in America, just for one example. And we can do that.

Of course, more must be done at home. Young people can have a greater influence on each other—schools, houses of worship, other places where children gather can do better. The entertainment community must do more to stop marketing violence to children. I'm proud that theater owners have agreed—[*applause*]—I wonder if that's coming more from the adults or the young people. [*Laughter*]

I feel very strongly about this. I'm proud that theater owners agreed that from now on, young people will be carded for R and PG-13 movies. I'm glad, thanks to the Vice

President and Mrs. Gore, that next year TV's will have the V-chip in half of all new TV's sold and that Internet and video game companies are helping with ratings and blocking technologies. We have our differences with various sectors of the entertainment community from time to time, but they have actually done quite a lot with the TV rating systems, the video game rating systems, the blocking technologies in the last few years, and they deserve credit for what they have done, as well as urging to do more.

But we have to face the fact that if you have more children spending more time alone—and let me say that one big difference between the time when I was your age, or even Bruce was your age, and today, in America as a whole: The average—average—young person spends 22 hours per week less with his or her parents than 30 years ago. From birth through age 18, that's over 2 years less time that the average young person spends with his or her parents—over 2 years. You don't notice it so much; it's just a few hours a day.

Why is that? More single parents, more working parents, more people living in suburbs spending more time going to and from work. Everybody is busy, busy, busy. And most of you are turning out just fine, and most of your parents are doing the best they can and doing a fine job. But we shouldn't minimize the fact that when this happens, the most vulnerable children among us will be even more vulnerable.

And that is why this whole entertainment culture counts—not because of you but because there are among us always vulnerable people. And there will be more of them, and they will be more vulnerable. And that's why the access to guns matters.

I've heard this—I got a letter the other day from a really nice person that I admire, saying, "Mr. President, we've got all these laws on the books, and if somebody wants a gun they can get it." Now, if you say that, it seems self-evident, since there's way over 220 million guns in the country. It seems self-evident. But let's look at the facts here.

Since we passed the Brady law, over the strenuous objections of the gun lobby, who then said that no criminal ever gets a gun from a gun store—just since we passed the